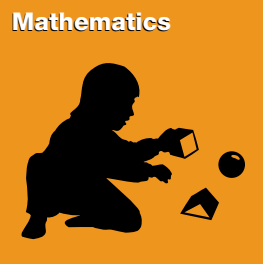
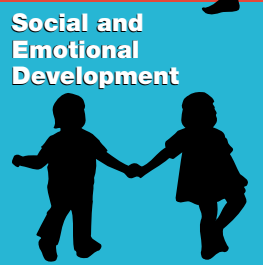


Rhode Island Early Learning Standards

2003



Rhode Island Early Learning Standards

*a framework to support all children
as they enter school ready to succeed*

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Introduction

Nationally, as part of the education reform effort, states and community leaders are encouraged to consult with local educators, families and community members to develop statewide standards, goals and expectations for what preschool children should know and be able to do. In Rhode Island, the education strategy holds all adults accountable for organizing resources and systems that will ensure success for all children. The number one goal of the Rhode Island Children's Cabinet is that *All Children Enter School Ready to Learn* regardless of socio-economic status, home language, special health needs or disabilities.

Background

With early care and education being provided in a wide variety of settings and in programs governed by different regulations, the Rhode Island Departments of Education and Human Services developed a partnership and an agreement to develop early childhood standards for Rhode Island. A Steering Committee was formed consisting of the Departments of Human Services; Education; Health; Children, Youth and Families; along with the Head Start State Collaboration Project; the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, to collaboratively guide the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards Project in the work of establishing a set of expectations for four-year-olds as they exit preschool programs to enter kindergarten.



The *Early Learning Standards* were initially developed by an Early Childhood Task Force charged with creating a document that is based on current education research and practice and reflects the priorities of practitioners in Rhode Island. Task Force members included representatives of early care and education programs, Head Start, the public schools, family child care home programs, higher education and parents. The *Early Learning Standards* they developed reflect a shared understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that children gain through high quality early childhood experiences.

The *Early Learning Standards* were then piloted by a partnership of early childhood providers in five communities to ensure that the *Learning Goals* and *Expectations* were appropriate for the target preschool population. A series of professional development sessions and mentoring was provided to these communities to support the implementation of the *Early Learning Standards* in their programs. Feedback from the pilot participants was used to refine the standards and to design professional development to be implemented statewide.

Project leaders intend that the standards be used by early care and education practitioners, families, schools, community members and legislators to design and support a comprehensive system of high quality early childhood programs for young children in Rhode Island leading to success in school.



Overview

The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards provide guidance to families, teachers and administrators on what children should know and be able to do as they enter kindergarten. They are intended to be inclusive of all children — English language learners, children with special health care needs, children with disabilities and children who are typically developing — recognizing that children may meet the *Early Learning Standards* at different times and in different ways.



The *Early Learning Standards* **should** be used to:

- inform educators in the development of curriculum
- inform families about the development of four-year-old children who are about to enter kindergarten
- focus a conversation among families, community members and legislators about the education of young children
- provide a framework for administrators to oversee curricula practices and advocate for resources
- guide the selection of assessment tools that are appropriate for learners from a variety of backgrounds with differing abilities.

The *Early Learning Standards* are **not** intended to be used to:

- assess the competence of young children
- mandate specific teaching practices or materials
- determine rewards or penalties for educational personnel
- prohibit children from entering kindergarten or
- exclude groups of children because of disabilities or home language.



The Rhode Island Early Learning Standards are divided into eight **domains**:

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language Development and Communication
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science
- Creativity
- Physical Health and Development

They are organized in a **three-tier structure**:

- *Domains* are general areas of learning.
- *Learning Goals and Definitions* are categories of knowledge and skills within each domain.
- *Expectations* are examples of typical four-year-old behavior that demonstrate competence in relation to each Learning Goal.

Play appears as the first *Learning Goal* in each of the eight domains. The *Early Learning Standards* reflect Rhode Island's strong belief in the important role of play in how children learn. Through play, children enhance the learning of skills, knowledge and dispositions that guarantees success in later schooling.

Approaches to Learning

As early as infancy, children display some of the dispositions and styles of learning that lead to success in school. Some children seem to be born well-organized and bursting with initiative while others require more structure and encouragement while they discover their unique capacity as learners. Adults must ensure that every child has the opportunity to take responsibility in directing their own learning. All children, regardless of innate abilities or the presence of disabilities, are able to learn and be successful.

When children complete a puzzle, construct an elaborate block structure, or ride a tricycle through a maze, they learn when to ask for assistance, seek additional resources and take responsibility for the care of materials. A well-planned learning environment, carefully designed activities and teachers who participate as co-learners will promote in children a willingness to try new experiences and demonstrate persistence in completing projects. As children connect their learning each day to past experiences, they learn how to take the initiative to carry their knowledge and skills to a new level of mastery.





Children demonstrate positive attitudes, habits and learning styles.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
1. Play Children engage in play as a means to develop their individual approach to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate sustained play with peers. • Enter into and play cooperatively with other children. • Choose from a variety of play activities.
2. Curiosity Children demonstrate curiosity and a willingness to participate in tasks and challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an eagerness and interest in learning through questioning and adding ideas. • Show an interest in people, things and the world around them. • Choose to participate in an increasing variety of activities, tasks and play areas.
3. Persistence Children demonstrate an increased ability to show initiative, accept help, take risks and work towards completing tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest time in a sustained activity despite distractions and interruptions. • Accept help from another child or adult when encountering a problem. • Seek help when appropriate from another child or adult.
4. Self-organization Children demonstrate an increased ability to establish goals, develop and follow through with plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an increased ability to understand a task as a series of steps. • Demonstrate an increased ability to organize themselves and materials in the learning environment. • Follow through to complete tasks and activities.
5. Reasoning Children demonstrate an increased ability to identify possible solutions to problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an increased ability to generate different approaches to solving problems. • Seek alternative approaches to problem solving.
6. Application Children use their prior experiences, sense and knowledge to learn in new ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate about events and experiences. • Use prior knowledge to understand new experiences.

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Social and Emotional Development

Children are dependent upon their interactions with peers and adults to construct a sense of self and to view themselves as learners. As toddlers, children begin to notice differences among people. They willingly explore these differences as they mature. This natural curiosity about other people helps children to develop a strong sense of identity and provides teachers and families with opportunities to associate schools and programs with a child's home and community.

Ideas of citizenship are based upon meaningful daily events and a classroom environment that ensures that children are aware of and respect another person's interests, preferences and cultural background. When children participate in activities that bring the community into the classroom, they feel good about themselves and find out how different groups of children live. Teachers and family members who help children negotiate the rules, responsibilities and challenging issues that characterize a vibrant learning environment can expose children to a community based upon kindness, equality and justice.





Children demonstrate a strong and positive self-concept, appropriate self-control and growth in their awareness of their responsibilities when interacting with others.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
1. Play Children use play as a vehicle to build relationships and to develop an appreciation for their own abilities and accomplishments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a variety of individual and group play experiences. • Explore and understand new experiences and differences among people.
2. Self-Concept Children demonstrate and express an awareness of self.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress toward identifying self according to gender, community membership, ethnicity, ability and family membership. • Separate from familiar people, places or things. • Demonstrate confidence in their range of abilities and express pride in accomplishments.
3. Self-Control Children increase their capacity for self-control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an increased understanding and acceptance of rules and routines within the learning environment. • Begin to accept the consequences of their behavior. • Use materials purposefully, respectfully and safely. • Effectively manage transitions between activities. • Demonstrate progress in the capacity to express feelings, needs and opinions.
4. Interactions with Others Children develop successful relationships with other members of their learning community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play, work and interact easily with one or more children and adults. • Develop friendships with peers. • Demonstrate empathy and caring for others. • Develop ability to take turns in activities. • Begin to participate in resolving conflicts and disagreements with others.
5. Sense of Community Children increasingly demonstrate a sense of belonging to the program, family and community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to respect the rights of others. • Demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation of the relationships, people and places that make up their communities. • Participate in the care of the learning environment. • Demonstrate progress toward an understanding and valuing of similarities and differences among people. • Perceive the needs of others and demonstrate growing empathy.

Language Development and Communication

A rich language environment has an essential impact on the rapid development of a child's brain, that occurs during the first years of life. When adults speak with children in a timely, responsive manner, children understand the construction of speech, learn new words and become capable conversationalists. It is important that young children have many opportunities to learn language and practice communication skills in order to obtain information and express themselves in a variety of ways and settings.

Children increase their language and communication skills by engaging in meaningful experiences that require them to effectively express their ideas and feelings, listen and understand others. Teachers must plan for the many ways that children communicate both verbally and non-verbally. Educators must respect and incorporate the rich diversity of families' languages and dialects into the educational environment as children make progress in speaking and understanding English.





Children develop skills in listening and expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
1. Play Children engage in play as a means to develop their listening and expressive language skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and experiment with conversation during daily activities and interactions. Represent stories and experiences through play. Think and talk about play experiences.
2. Listening and Understanding Children develop skills in listening and in understanding language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen and understand stories, songs and poems. Listen and increasingly understand conversations and questions. Follow directions that involve multiple steps. Learn to wait and take turns during conversations. Demonstrate progress in listening and understanding English while maintaining home language.
3. Speaking and Communicating Children will use verbal and non-verbal language to express and communicate information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate needs or thoughts through non-verbal gestures, actions, expressions and words. Participate in communication around a topic. Use more complex and longer sentences. Communicate clearly enough to be understood by unfamiliar listeners. Begin a conversation with other children and adults. Understand an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.

Literacy

Literacy is the foundation for creating a well-educated and responsible citizen. It is essential that each child arrive in kindergarten able to take advantage of the materials, activities and interactions in classrooms that nourish literacy. The ways in which children learn to read and write are similar to how they develop language. Just as children seem to be compelled to learn language, children become excited about using pictures and letters to communicate.

The printed word, whether it is in a storybook or in the environment, is the bridge that allows children to connect themselves to distant places, to quality children's literature and to new ideas. Through natural exposure to books and print, and through conversations that prompt children to discuss the people and important events in their lives, children discover that written words are another way to share ideas. A child who enters school experiencing the joy of a storybook, developing awareness of letters of the alphabet and demonstrating the ability to write a few letters, is a child well prepared to learn to read and write.

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Children develop skills in writing and reading while exploring print in books and in the environment.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
1. Play Children engage in play as a means to develop early reading and writing skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use symbols and forms of early writing to create more complex play. • Use writing tools and materials in all areas of the learning environment. • Create play ideas that come from favorite stories, poems and songs.
2. Early Writing Children demonstrate an interest and ability to use symbols to represent words and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to print letters in own name. • Understand that writing carries a message. • Experiment with a variety of writing tools and materials. • Use scribbles, shapes, letter-like symbols and letters to write or represent words or ideas. • Begin to dictate ideas, sentences and stories.
3. Early Reading Children demonstrate an interest in: <p>A. Phonemic and Phonological Awareness Learning letters and the combination of letter sounds with letter symbols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show increasing ability to discriminate and identify the sounds of language. • Demonstrate growing awareness of the beginning sounds of words. • Show growing ability to hear and discriminate separate syllables in words. • Begin to associate sounds with written words. • Recognize and generate rhymes.
<p>B. Book Knowledge and Appreciation Understanding and appreciating that books and other forms of print have a purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to read or tell a story and guess what happens next. • Listen to and talk about a variety of types of literature. • Handle and care for books in a respectful manner.
<p>C. Comprehension Understanding that spoken and written words have meaning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retell parts of a story with prompts. • Connect information to familiar experiences when being read a story. • Demonstrate understanding of the meaning of a story.
<p>D. Print Awareness and Concepts Recognizing the association between spoken and written words by following print as it is read aloud.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and investigate books and other forms of print. • Understand that print carries a message. • Show an increasing awareness of how books are organized. • Recognize some letters and words captured in books and in the environment. • Recognize own name in print. • Show an increasing ability to recognize individual words in sentences.
<p>E. Alphabet Knowledge Recognize that symbols are associated with letters of the alphabet and that they form words.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the names of some letters and words. • Identify some letters in print. • Know the names of most letters in own name.

Mathematics

Mathematics helps young children make sense of the world around them and understand their physical world. Children are inclined to make comparisons, notice similarities and differences in objects and group their toys and materials. The ability to organize information into categories, quantify data and solve problems helps children to learn about time, space and numbers.

When children play in the sandbox, cook applesauce and complete a puzzle, they are engaging in activities that allow them to develop the thinking skills that are naturally used in daily life. Children learn the uses of mathematics to describe and explore relationships among objects and materials in the environment. They increasingly develop the vocabulary and skills to measure, describe patterns and to express order and position.

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Children develop ways to solve problems and to think about math.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
1. Play Children engage in play to develop their mathematical thinking and problem solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to make groups and match objects. • Use counting and number vocabulary as a part of play. • Experiment with patterns and shapes. • Explore measurement, number and quantity with various materials. • Collect and organize information and materials as a natural part of play.
2. Numbers and Operations Children show interest and curiosity in counting and grouping objects and numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match, sort, put in a series and regroup objects according to one characteristic. • Begin to use numbers and counting as a means for solving problems, predicting and measuring quantity. • Use one-to-one correspondence in counting objects and matching groups of objects. • Begin to associate a number of objects with names and symbols for numbers. • Use words such as more than, less than and add/subtract to express some number concepts.
3. Geometry and Spatial Sense Children show an interest in recognizing and creating shapes and an awareness of position in space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe and name common shapes found in the natural environment. • Use language to understand the arrangement, order and position of objects that are on top of, next to, on the bottom, underneath, beside and in front of other objects. • Group objects according to their shape and size.
4. Patterns and Measurement Children show an interest in recognizing and creating patterns, comparing and measuring time and quantity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group and name a number of similar objects into simple categories. • Begin to understand that some events take place in the past, present or future. • Begin to order, compare or describe objects according to size, length, height and weight using standard or non-standard forms of measurement.

Science

Children are captivated by the natural world and by physical events. They insist that teachers and family members answer their questions about the world around them. By cultivating this sense of wonder, we help children to become scientific thinkers.

Children can learn to use the scientific method in their everyday life. The questions that children ask about insects flying, making a shadow or mixing paints are transformed into hypotheses about their world. They use their senses and scientific tools to observe, collect and interpret data and draw conclusions. Communicating their findings informally in conversations or through the documentation of results, lead children to ask new questions and to continue the cycle of scientific investigation.

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Children will understand and use the scientific method of asking questions, observing and recording their findings and discussing their conclusions.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
<p>1. Play Children engage in play as a means to develop their scientific skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions based upon discoveries made while playing. • Use play to discover, question and understand the natural and physical world. • Use scientific tools as props in their play.
<p>2. Scientific Knowledge Children learn about the development of the natural and physical world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect, describe and learn to record information through discussion, drawings and charts. • Use tools and their senses to make observations, gather and record information and make predictions about what might happen. • Investigate changes in materials and cause-effect relationships. • Ask and pursue their questions through simple investigations.
<p>3. Scientific Skills and Methods Children begin to use scientific tools and methods to learn about their world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the natural processes of growing, changing and adapting to the environment. • Make simple observations, predictions, explanations and generalizations based on real life experiences. • Explore time, temperature and cause-effect relationships based on everyday experiences.

Creativity

Investigating and appreciating the arts allow children to integrate a number of different skills essential to child development. The arts provide each child with another vehicle and organizing framework to express ideas and feelings. Music, movement, drama and visual arts stimulate children to use words, manipulate tools and media and solve problems in ways that simultaneously convey meaning and are aesthetically pleasing.

Through experimenting with sounds, colors, forms, motion and words, children communicate in ways that are distinctly their own and that reflect their own learning style. Each painting, dramatic play scenario and improvised tune provides teachers and families with insights into a child's interests and abilities and allows children to express what they know. In an environment that fosters the arts, children learn to appreciate the contributions of other children and the works of others that reflect different experiences, cultures and views.





Children enjoy, express themselves, create and learn about the arts through experiences with a variety of art forms and media.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
<p>1. Play Children engage in play as a means of self-expression and creativity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in spontaneous imaginative play using a variety of materials to dramatize stories and experiences. Use movement, a variety of media and music while playing to represent stories, moods and experiences. Use musical instruments and tools from various art forms as props in dramatic play.
<p>2. Creative Expression Children engage in individual or group activities that represent real-life experiences, ideas, knowledge, feelings and fantasy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore various roles in dramatic play through the use of props, language and fantasy roles with others. Use movement and a variety of musical styles to express feelings and to understand and interpret experiences. Participate in musical activities using a variety of materials for expression and representation. Plan, work cooperatively and create drawings, paintings, sculptures and other art projects. Demonstrate care and persistence when involved in art projects.
<p>3. Tools Children use a variety of tools and art media to creatively express their ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with different tools to creatively express and present ideas. Select and use a variety of tools to approach tasks.
<p>4. Appreciation of the Arts Children express interest in and begin to build a knowledge base in the arts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to understand and develop a vocabulary to share opinions about artistic creations and experiences. Enjoy participating in a variety of art experiences. Appreciate and demonstrate respect for the work of others. Begin to notice differences in the arts from a variety of cultures.

Physical Health and Development

Children use their senses and bodies to explore their physical environment. They investigate and practice with intensity the motions that lead to the mastery of fine and large motor tasks. How a child learns to sit, walk or hold a spoon has implications for how the child understands space, coordinates thinking and holds a pencil. Children often describe their competence according to their physical accomplishments.

Children enthusiastically explore how to move their bodies. Children may need encouragement to adapt sensible health habits. They appreciate learning how to enhance their strength, balance, muscle control and coordination.





Young children's future health and well-being are directly related to strengthening their large and small muscles, using their sensory experiences and practicing healthy behavior.

Learning Goals and Definitions	Expectations
1. Play Children engage in play as a means to understand healthy behavior and develop their physical bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in games, outdoor play and other forms of play that enhance physical fitness. • Use their senses to explore materials and experience activities. • Begin to use health and safety practices. • Initiate activities that challenge their bodies in new ways.
2. Gross Motor Children increasingly move their bodies in ways that demonstrate control, balance and coordination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate increasing strength and stamina in movement activities. • Demonstrate body and space awareness to move and stop with control over speed and direction. • Develop coordination and balance with a variety of playground equipment.
3. Fine Motor Children use their fingers and hands in ways that develop hand-eye coordination, strength, control and object manipulation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate increasing strength and stamina to perform fine motor tasks. • Use hand-eye coordination to perform fine motor tasks with a variety of manipulative materials. • Show increased awareness and control of tools for various learning activities.
4. Healthy Habits Children begin to understand how daily activity and healthy behavior promote overall personal health and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate safety awareness when purposefully using materials. • Demonstrate the increasing ability to perform self-care skills independently when eating, dressing, toileting and washing hands. • Shows care for personal belongings. • Begin to understand that some foods have nutritional value.
5. Senses Children increase their understanding of the use of their eyes, ears, fingers, nose and mouth and how the senses work together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminate between a variety of sights, smells, sounds, textures and tastes. • Explore and learn to tolerate a wide variety of sensory input. • Combine and use different senses depending on the activity.

Glossary

Art Forms: The four components of art education — dance, music, dramatic play and visual arts.

Cause/Effect: Understanding how action creates a change in the environment.

Comprehension: Understanding the meaning of spoken and written languages.

Cooperative Play: Physical activities in which children play with each other rather than against each other to master challenges.

Curriculum: The framework for the philosophy, goals and expectations for guiding children's learning and engaging families in their children's development.

Data: Information used as a basis for making decisions and drawing conclusions.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: The manner in which children are provided opportunities to learn and practice newly acquired skills, offering challenges just beyond their present level of mastery and taking place in a setting where children are safe, valued and where physical and psychological needs are met.

Discriminate: Use of senses to compare and note differences between objects.

Documentation: The way in which information is recorded by practitioners, children and families to capture events and child progress.

Empathy: The ability to recognize the feelings of others and respond appropriately.

Ethnicity: Ethnic affiliation or distinctiveness; belonging to a particular group by descent, language or culture rather than by nationality.

Expressive Language: Having the ability to convey ideas and feelings using words and expanded sentences.

Fine Motor Tasks: Using and coordinating the small muscles in the hands and wrist with dexterity.

Large Motor Tasks: Moving the large muscles in the body, especially the arms and legs, consciously and deliberately.

Learning Environment: The structure of the setting that makes it possible for practitioners to guide children in their development and learning.

Literacy: Using vocabulary, oral language, phonological awareness, letters, words, print, comprehension, books and other print materials to help children explore, expand and participate in their world.

Order/Classify: Methods of data collection, organization and representation. Others include sorting, graphing, counting, measuring and comparing.

Phonological Awareness: Hearing and understanding the different sounds of spoken language including hearing and understanding the different ways oral language can be broken down into individual parts (phonemes).

Play: A dynamic process that develops and changes becoming more varied and complex, allowing children to practice skills they will need later in life. Play is the vehicle for learning and development across domains, reflecting the social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Practitioner: Professional charged with guiding children's learning including teachers, caregivers and assistants.

Predict: Use of prior knowledge to guess what an outcome will be.

Scientific Method: How children put facts together to make sense of the world around them including observing, questioning, experimenting, manipulating, predicting and demonstrating understanding of concepts.

Sensory Experiences: Providing objects and materials that children can explore using all their senses.

Symbols: Scribbling, scribble writing, letter like forms, letters, numbers and pictures used to represent sounds, words, ideas and feelings.

Visual Arts: Painting, drawing, collages, modeling and sculpting with various materials.



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